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BOOK REVIEWS.

H. E. KREHBIEL, *Afro-American Folk-Songs*. New York, G. Schirmer & Co., 1915.

FOLK-LORISTS and ethnologists, particularly those with musical bent, should welcome this recent result of many years of interested study on the part of Mr. Krehbiel, and thank him for once more bringing to the attention of the musical public the wealth of folk-song material lying hitherto almost completely ignored in our Southern States.

It seems as if constant reiteration of this fact is still necessary, considering the strange lack of interest in a music so unique and beautiful. Carl Engel,¹ as early as 1866, urged its careful study, and yet in 1917 the work is only begun.

The book, which Mr. Krehbiel avowedly did not intend to be scientific, because of the layman's generally careful avoidance of such literature, is sufficiently popular for the merest dabbler, yet highly instructive and interesting. The chapters on "Music Among the Africans" (No. V), "Structural Features of the Poems" and "Funeral Music" (No. VIII), and "Songs of the Black Creoles" (No. X), are especially interesting to the ethnologist, particularly No. X, which goes into the linguistic structure of the songs.

Musicians and folk-lorists will enjoy the numerous fine examples of songs of different types scattered throughout the book. The only wish of the reviewer is that there had been more of these, even if it made necessary less of the entertaining chat which often accompanies them.

The study of modes used brings out the fact that there was a quite common use of the minor scale with the raised sixth and frequently missing seventh. The example given on p. 52, which Mr. Krehbiel has analyzed as based on the whole-tone scale, seems to the writer to belong to the group of songs illustrating this particular kind of minor. The presence of the perfect fourth involving two and one half steps, occurring as an important part of the melody in the three different sections, would seem to preclude the possibility of a whole-tone basis. The analysis seems much more satisfactory if the three sections which are identical melodically, are considered as being in B, E, and A minor respectively, the change of key being easily accounted for by the alternation of solo and chorus, the solo resuming the melody where the chorus stopped after a very long note.

In the light of the author's scathing criticisms of Dr. Wallaschek's attitude toward American Negro music, his own remarks on that of the American Indian are rather surprising. It may be because up to the present time published collections in any large number have not been available. The writer cannot pass by the remarks on p. 91, referring to the alleged lack of interest of scientists and museums in the collection of songs. In spite of the fact that for many years no one could be found who would transcribe the records in any number, scientists have continued to collect

¹ *Studies in National Music* (London, 1866).

them. There are, to be sure, no African collections in this country, though there are large ones in Europe.

But American museums do not lack collections from other places. The American Museum of Natural History has over fifteen hundred records, some Siberian and Eskimo, many Chinese, and hundreds of Indian songs. There are many more in Washington, and at the Victoria Museum in Ottawa, Can. The failure has not been on the part of the ethnologists, but entirely on the side of the musicians. However, they are now being studied, and eventually there will be plenty of material for comparison.

That the music of the North American Indians "conforms to a stereotyped formula, having a high beginning and repetitions of a melodic motif on lower degrees of the scale," is true only of certain types of songs, and quite corresponds to conceptions of form suitable for certain kinds of European music, with this exception: that it cannot as yet be stated in how far this recognition of form is conscious with the Indian. But Indian songs, as a whole, are full of variety and beauty. They are by no means entirely "ritualistic or performed by obligation," as any number of love and purely descriptive songs will prove; while these, as well as war-songs, are often fine specimens of melodic and rhythmic composition.

Another point to be noticed is the study made of the kind of scales used by the Afro-Americans and those used by Europeans. The Afro-American songs are preponderatingly major and pentatonic, and, so far as present data go, so are the majority of the songs of the world. That edicts prohibiting sad or minor songs could have been so widely effective among the Negroes as to be felt, seems doubtful. It is more likely due to a psychological rebound in the make-up of the Negro. That these songs are mostly religious or labor-songs may have something to do with it.

Perhaps environmentalists will find something interesting in Mr. Krehbiel's statement, taken from Engel, that apparently countries of high latitudes make greater use of minor modes, Russia, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark being examples.

To my mind, it would seem rather a matter of temperament and diffusion. Surely the "sorrow and suffering" of the Russians cannot be held entirely responsible for their frequent use of minor, any more than climate, of which, as Mr. Krehbiel observes, there are all kinds in Russia. There are other peoples who have also suffered oppression and slavery, whose songs are chiefly major.

Such generalizations as the above have left out of consideration many places of high latitude not yet heard from; and it would seem necessary to obtain data from these, as well as from peoples of experiences similar to those of the Russians, before drawing definite conclusions.

There are too many interesting points in the book to note properly in a review. Saving a few instances like the above, it is a valuable contribution to the subject of American folk-lore. The author styles it a "pioneer." It is certainly a worthy one. With his collection and long acquaintance with the subject, really serious students of American folk-lore and music (and there are a number) will have only one wish, — that there could have been more of it.

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